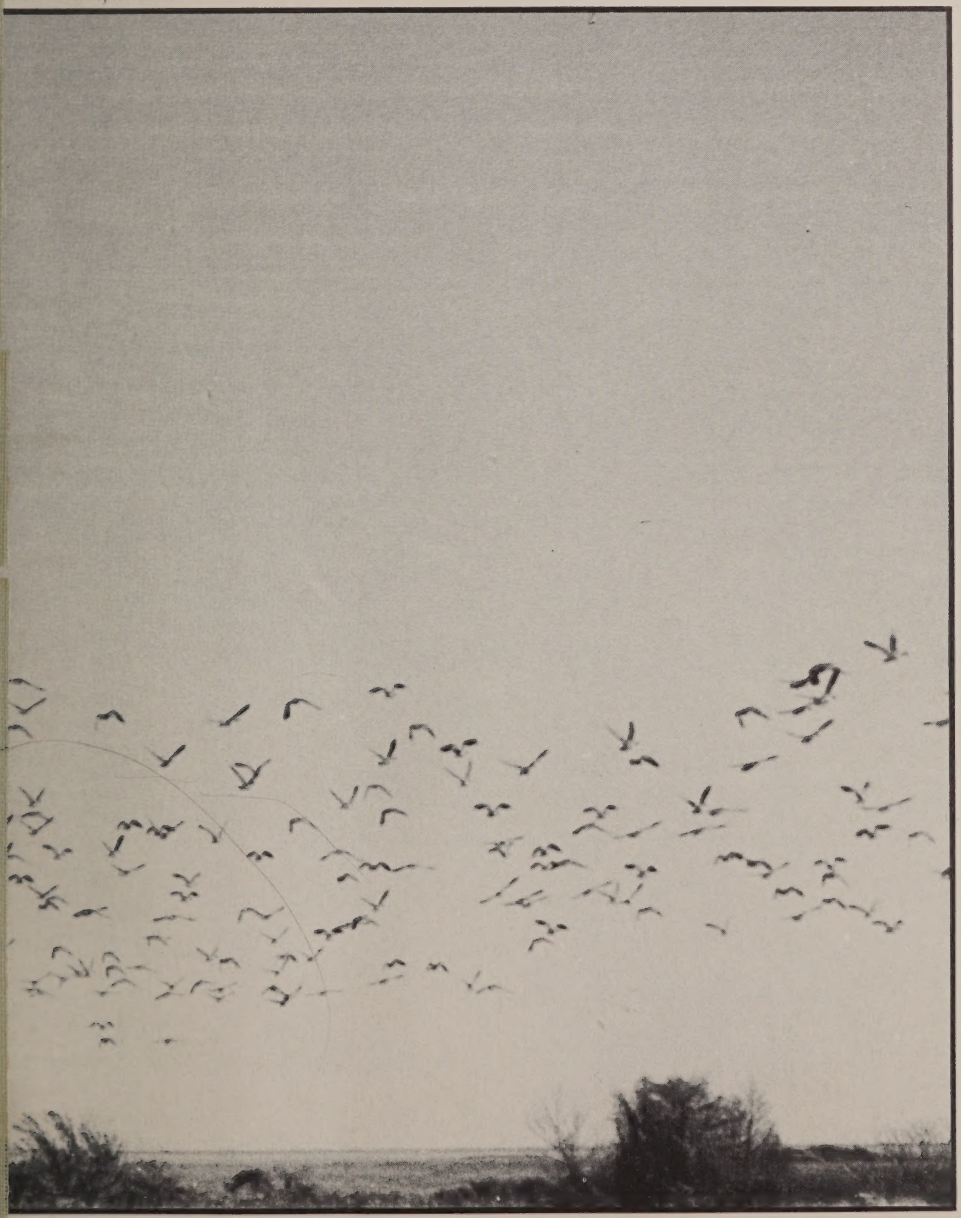
FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

olume 38, No. 6 December, 1987



Cover photograph by Tom Dunham

To Our Readers 2

Insights 3

Shattering Images: the Interfaith Dialogue, *by Donald K. Swearer* 4

How People Pray, *by Sarah Jones* 10

An Interview at the Upper Room Spiritual Center 15

Spirituality and Everyday Life: Care, *by Henri J. M. Nouwen* 23

Deep Prayer, *by Sri Swami Satchidananda* 26

Abraham Lincoln and Prayer, *by Dan Bassuk* 29

Mirabai: Hindu Princess, Beggar and Saint, *by William M. Stephens* 32

Prayers to Share 37

"A Transforming Experience": Learning to Walk in Faith, *by Jeanette Martino Land* 38

Student Section 42

Books We Have Enjoyed 43

"This is a highly inspired, ethical publication. Love streams out of it!" "Part of my devotional reading every day." "I find your articles about different beliefs very interesting and informative. They make for better understanding among all persons." "It strengthens my faith in prayer." "The idea of interreligious understanding and cooperation is very dear to me. This is the way to peace." "I love it! It is well written by beautiful, loving people! It is delightful, inspirational, and uplifting!" "You give me everything I need: fellowship, insight, hope, and prayer."

These responses to the question, "Why do you read 'Fellowship In Prayer'?" in our Readership Survey of last October, are typical of the large number of answers received. Thank you! Clearly readers find that "Fellowship in Prayer" is a rich source of spiritual nourishment and encouragement in a world that more than ever needs the power of individual prayer and meditation. That this publication has been able to contribute significantly to the deep spiritual awakening envisioned by its cofounders, Karl Allison Evans and Kathryn G. Brown, is a source of great satisfaction to us.

Our problem now is to find the resources needed to not only maintain "F.I.P." at its present level, but also to meet the ever-growing requests for subscriptions. Our circulation has quadrupled in the last ten months. Unfortunately, the price of everything that goes into publishing and mailing this publication to you has also risen dramatically. We hope never to be in the position of being unable to fill requests for "Fellowship In Prayer" because of lack of funds.

Under the circumstances, we ask each of you who wishes to continue reading "Fellowship In Prayer" to contribute $10.00—if you are able—to the cost of publishing and mailing "F.I.P." for the next year. By so doing you will not only ensure for yourself uninterrupted mailings of the publication, you will also be contributing to the spiritual renaissance that is the world's best hope for peace.

Paul Walsh
President, Fellowship In Prayer

I believe in God as I believe in my friends, because I feel the breath of God's affection, feel the invisible and intangible hand, drawing me, leading me, grasping me. Over and over again in my life I have seen myself suspended over the abyss; over and over again I have found myself at the crossroads, confronted by a choice of ways and aware that in choosing one I should be renouncing all the others. For there is no turning back upon these roads of life. And in such unique moments as these, I have felt the impulse of a mighty power, conscious, sovereign, and loving. And then, before the feet of the wayfarer, opened out the way of the Lord.

Miguel de Unamuno

"Wisdom," the Master said, "is simply the ability to recognize." "To recognize what?" the disciple asked. "Spiritual wisdom," the Master said, "is the ability to recognize the butterfly in a caterpillar, the eagle in an egg, the saint in the sinner."

Source unknown

The question, . . . "Am I happy?" is the wrong question. . . . The real question . . . is, "Am I free?"

Basil Pennington

The further one breaks into the region of the origin, the deeper the region becomes.

Zen saying

God causes this universe to exist but consents not to command it. . . . Instead God allows two other forces to rule. On the one hand there is the blind necessity attaching to matter . . . and on the other the autonomy essential to thinking persons.

Simone Weil

As the bee takes the essence of a flower and flies away without destroying its beauty and perfume, so wander in this life.

The Dhammapada

A monk asked Master Sosan: "Please sprinkle your compassionate teaching so that I may be liberated." "Who has put you under restraint?" asked the Master. "No one," he said. "Why then do you ask to be liberated?" At this, the monk awakened fully.

Zen story

Shattering Images: the Interfaith Dialogue

DONALD K. SWEARER

Why do we project images onto life of what we would like it to be? Why do we project images onto people of what we would like them to be? Why do we create God in our own image? A key to interfaith dialogue and to personal relationships lies in the author's answer to these important questions. Instead of putting people in boxes to keep them at a safe distance, he suggests, let us dare to draw close and open ourselves to the other's reality, honestly sharing our convictions and struggling to understand.

Dialogue in the broadest sense is simply being open to those around us. It means, if you will, "speaking together with life," listening and responding, not merely "monologing" our way. True dialogue involves openness, vulnerability, risk.

But dialogue is more than listening, being open, and a willingness to be challenged by the Faith stance of an-other. It means being able to give as well as to take. It means, in other words, working out our own Faith stance in the crucible of our dialogue with the world, and then having the courage of our convictions. Dialogue is not—in the language of my teenage son—a *wimpy* enterprise but a process of mutual empowering.

Dialogue is like the ultimate paradox of religious Faith—in giving up oneself one finds one's true self. Dialogue and Faith are journeys which move from conventional ways of understanding ourselves and the world to unconventional, miraculous and paradoxical insights. Like the dialectical Zen Buddhist Koan these journeys of Dialogue and Faith move us through various stages characterized metaphorically by the following enigmatic Zen saying:

When I first began my Dialogue with Life I saw the trees as trees, the river as river, the mountains as mountains; then I saw that the trees were not really trees, the river was not really river, the mountains were not really mountains; finally I came to understand that the trees were trees, the river was river, and the mountains were mountains.

Don Swearer is one of the outstanding figures in worldwide interfaith dialogue. A Presbyterian layman, he has practiced Buddhist meditation in Thailand and is currently a professor in the religion department of Swarthmore College. Among his many books is the highly acclaimed Dialogue, the Key to Understanding Other Religions.

My intention is not to use this paradoxical statement as a way of talking about Zen Buddhism, but as a lead-in to the metaphor in my title, "Shattering Images." Let me try to help you grapple with the meaning of the metaphor in terms of my theme—the interfaith Dialogue.

To shatter an image; to have an image shattered. Isn't this an experience we've all gone through? Aren't these often wrenching, painful experiences? Do you remember in adolescence when you came to the realization that your parents weren't perfect? How did you react when you discovered that someone you had greatly admired had lied to you; or that your favorite professor was really rather rigid and unforgiving? These are difficult realizations largely because the persons involved—friend, professor, parent, spouse—somehow shattered the image we had superimposed on them. We had had a particular picture of them in our minds; we had frozen them in time and somehow forgot that all of us are complex and constantly changing and that the stereotypical pictures we devise of ourselves and others aren't adequate to the actual reality.

We seem to have an inveterate tendency to "image" things, to project onto life images of what we think it is like, or onto people pictures of what we would like them to be or expect them to be. Why? In part, we "make in our own image" because that's the safest way to be. We want to protect ourselves. People who differ most from us are not simply hard to understand; they threaten the very foundations of our being. We may call them enemies; but family and friends who don't act the way we expect or like them to can be just as threatening.

To "image" means to make manageable, to hold at a distance, to put something into a frozen time and space instead of being in dialogue with reality. It's easier to live when we can put people in their proper categories—Communist and Contra, Muslim and Buddhist, Parent and Child, Professor and Priest.

I have a colleague whose 5-year-old son used to watch TV from a large box from which he had cut a viewing screen, evoking the picture, if you will, of two television sets watching one another. To be sure this was just a child's imaginative play. Yet, like the young boy, don't we often put ourselves as well as others into boxes, projecting and receiving two dimensional images on a flat surface rather than opening ourselves to life's multidimensionality? It's a bit like returning home from one of those "if it's Tuesday it must be Rome" whirlwind tours of the world. We're left with a blur of images seen through air-conditioned buses, and catered through Hilton restaurants. "It was a delightful trip," we tell our friends

Tom Dunham

as we show them our photos of Maggie and Sam in front of Stonehenge and the Taj Mahal, the exotic snake charmer, and the quaint tribal family. What we've left out or perhaps not been able to experience at all are the third and fourth dimensions of life in all its painful but joyful reality.

The biblical story of Aaron and the golden calf raises our discussion of image as metaphor to another level. After the Hebrew people's escape from Egypt and their period of wilderness wandering, Moses goes out to meet God, leaving Aaron and his people at the foot of Mount Sinai. Threatened and frightened they want something visible to hold onto, to assure them that God is really with them, and so they image God as a golden calf. In other words, fearful, afraid to risk, to venture forth to meet God face to face, they seek to image the unimageable (or as one of my students once said, "to eff the ineffable") and thereby close themselves off to the reality of the presence of the divine.

If the images we create and project of ourselves and others deprive life of its heights and depths, homogenize the rich texturedness of our deepest experiences into a flat two-dimensional picture—how much more so do our attempts to image God deprive that Ground of All Being of its most profound meaning and significance. To be sure, the most sublime expressions of the human spirit come from our efforts to image our deepest and most inexpressible feelings, those times when, like Moses, we have come face to face with God. Yet, the images serve their proper function not when they limit the divine, but when they open us to the reality to which they point. As the great Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore put it:

> Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!
> Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes, and see thy God is not before thee!
> He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on this dusty soil!

The Apostle Paul, speaking to the people of Athens, echoed somewhat similar sentiments: The God who made the world and everything in it does not live in shrines made by human beings. Rather, that God is the One in whom we live and move and have our being and, hence, is not far from each of us.

Now, you may be wondering what all of this has to do with interfaith

dialogue. What I've tried to do in talking about the metaphor of "shattering images" is to affirm a prerequisite for inter-religious dialogue and understanding: the realization that God, Brahman, Tao, or Nirvana are different images of the divine which ought not to limit our experience of the Ultimate, but open our hearts and minds to its Reality. I do not mean to imply by this statement that all religions are the same. Obviously, they are not. However, all religions, including Christianity, are, at their best, sublime attempts to express what is most inexpressible about the nature of human experience. Thus, inter-religious dialogue in the most profound sense takes place when the images of one tradition shatter the images of another, thereby allowing the reality to which those images point to break out of the restraints in which we have confined them.

I would like to tell you something of my own personal experience living in Thailand and studying Buddhism first hand.

I first went to Thailand exactly 30 years ago. I had graduated from Princeton and gone on to Yale Divinity School but the death of both parents during my senior year in college served to make my first year in seminary difficult. I felt at sea; the familiar images of my youth were blurred and shattered; so, I embarked on a journey. It was a journey to Thailand to teach English at Bangkok Christian College as a Fraternal Worker with the Presbyterian Church. My experience in Thailand turned out to be an important turning point in my life. It was, in the deepest sense, the beginning of my Faith Journey, my Dialogue with Life.

During those two and a half years I studied Buddhism through first-hand contact with Buddhist monks. A few of us—Protestant, Catholic, Buddhist—formed an inter-religious dialogue group and thus began what has been for me a life-long process of discovery. What did I discover by this experience? That by being in Dialogue, by being open to the Faith of an-other, my own Faith-understanding is enriched and transformed. If you will, the images in which I had confined my religious self-understanding were shattered, allowing the reality to which they point to break through.

One of the focal points of that transformation was my understanding of the central claim of the Christian tradition—that the man Jesus is the Christ in whom God is fully revealed. Christians through the years have tended to interpret this claim exclusively, and have taken such Biblical statements as "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" as the basis of a kind of Christian triumphalism. Christian triumphalism always struck

me as a very contradictory way of imaging the man Jesus born in a humble stable and crucified as a common criminal. My personal dialogue with Buddhism broke down the rigid confines of my image of Jesus. Through struggling with such paradoxical Buddhist claims as the teaching that there is no-self, I came to a deeper personal apprehension of St. Paul's difficult-to-grasp exclamation, "It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me." By trying to come to terms with the Buddhist view of life as suffering I saw the Christian understanding of sin in a new light. By living among Buddhists I saw that God's grace is not a power dispensed from on high but means being transformed, living *gracefully* because one is freed from self-preoccupation or, as a Buddhist might put it, one is a not-self.

Authentic Dialogue means having our conventional understanding of the images and symbols of our Faith shattered so that the Reality to which they point can enter into our lives. This enables us to grasp that the trees are really trees, the rivers really rivers, the mountains really mountains and in doing so embrace the Buddhist and the Hindu, the Jew and the Muslim as brothers and sisters in the Dialogue of Faith.

How People Pray

SARAH JONES

Some people kneel when they pray, some stand, some sit, others lie prostrate on the floor. Have the various prayer formats practiced throughout the centuries across the globe in hundreds of religious traditions been comprehensively studied and described? A year ago, Fellowship In Prayer Trustee James T. C. Liu, a professor in the East Asian Studies Department of Princeton University, posed this fascinating question. Unable to find a book on the topic, we asked a prominent religious researcher, Sarah Jones, to study the issue for us. She found a massive amount of material written on the way people pray and considers her article to be a "highly selective" introduction to the subject.

From prehistoric times people have believed in a supernatural order and divine being or beings who receive prayer. Across cultures we have prayed and offered thanks for answers.

Neolithic tombs built in Britain for the afterworld life suggest our earliest thoughts about spiritual realms. Through the Bronze Age, tree-trunk coffins symbolized a dug-out boat enroute by water to the next world where the spirits of ancestors heard prayers to them: a practice originating in Egypt and attested in Scandinavia, into the Iron Age through its culmination with the Vikings.

During the first millennium B.C. worshippers invoked the Mother God as faithfully as the Nicenes later prayed to God the Father. While Orphic and Delphic initiates gathered in circles to chant songs to the Triple Goddess, the ascetic Pythagorians retreated to hillsides to meditate within circles drawn on the ground. A sign of eternity, the circle was thought to empower and protect from worldly care.

After the birth of Christ the Roman Apuleius writing in the second century A.D. reported Lucius' prayer to the Great Mother as he "plunged his head seven times into the water of the sea; which number seven is . . . agreeable to holy and divine things, as the worthy sage . . . Pythagoras declared." Lucius then asked her to save him from "great travail" and to grant "peace and rest to my adversities, for I have endured

Sarah Jones is a Consulting Editor and Researcher from Texas who has been living in Princeton since completing her graduate work. She is currently working on a collection of essays.

enough labor and peril. . . ." (A prayer for healing much like Lucius' *de profundis* appears in a twelfth century Latin medicinal text.)

The first century Jewish scholar Josephus described the Essene communities to which Jesus probably belonged. The Essenes wore linen robes (blue for novices, white for adepts), bowed East at dawn, proph-

esied and also meditated sitting inside a circle drawn in sand. They swore to secrecy the names of God, whose letters were believed sacred. A century earlier the Alexandrian philosopher Demetrius noted that in Egypt "the priests sing hymns to the gods by uttering the seven vowels in succession." Each vowel contained a healing effect, each represented deities of the seven-day week, and together they comprised the secret name of God.

To this day religious Jews do not write the name of God. Some use Hebrew abbreviations or euphemisms such as Hashem, The Name. Others substitute a tetragrammaton for Hebrew letters, pronounced Adonai and vocalized differently when read from the Bible. Originally God's name could be uttered only in the Temple by the high priest, and the proscription against taking the name in vain or casually remains.

Jewish prayer has always included fixed rites or *keva*: bowing to God as sovereign; standing when the Torah scroll is visible during worship or at the opening of the Eighteen Benedictions; making supplications three times a day. On high holy days like Yom Kippur, the cantor and sometimes the congregation humble themselves prostrate before the grandeur of God. In the Hasidic tradition one sings and sways praying, the idea being intentions—*kavannah*—direct prayer and that intention toward the holy involves spirit, mind and body. Among non-orthodox circles today, interest is growing in *havurah* or fellowship, a participatory spirituality with roots in *kavannah* and the role of inner guidance as to when and how to pray (recalling Rebbe Barukh of Medzebozh: "My soul knows its way in Torah").

For Christians too, differences in ritual and more freely formed praise have given rise to a range of traditions. Roman Catholics who worship standing, sitting and kneeling sometimes pray by set liturgies and observed hours, seasons and times, for which the crucified Christ and cross are central.

St. John Cassian in fifth century Gaul composed a teaching on prayer, the precedent for the Jesus Prayer. *The Cloud of Unknowing* instructs readers to "sit relaxed and quiet . . . (and) center" on God alone; then choose one short word for all prayer, a word to represent God. The format resembles the anonymous Russian peasant's *The Way of the Pilgrim*, written in the 1800's about the Jesus Prayer. (Fourteenth century variants of the Jesus Prayer are identical to the Sufi dhikr method practiced a century before in Arabia, using the name Allah instead of Jesus.)

During the Reformation St. Ignatius of Loyola completed his schematic *Spiritual Exercises*, in which he suggested breathing between words of the Our Father, Hail Mary and the Apostles' Creed. "Rhythmical recitation" was part of a rigorous examination of one's conscience and relationship to God. While Ignatius reshaped the devotional life, Protestant reformers experimented with liturgies based largely on Catholic worship but without vestments, candles or crucifixes. As Martin Luther paraphrased psalms for hymns, so John Calvin called for singing psalms and scriptures as a form of prayer. Calvin's congregations sang a cappella and in unison only, symbolizing the peoples' unity with God. His innovative free-form prayer for illumination is offered in many Protestant churches today.

The more radical spontaneous prayer was first said by Puritans react-

ing against the tacit rules of order in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. Quakers and in a different vein, evangelicals have used extemporaneous prayer as demonstration of God's guidance. (Combining open and fixed prayer, Jonathan Edwards asked his congregations to pray from the heart at a set time for seven years, to ease political tensions in Scotland.)

Western ways of speaking and posturing in prayer contrast Eastern traditions in which one meditates knowing the oneness of body and spirit. Taoism for example, a popular religion in China since about 100 B.C., has always stressed breath control to prepare the mind for truth. Based in part on a meditation text written in 187 B.C., Taoist prayer involves focusing the mind on an image and breathing the *pneuma* or spirit of the holy. *Chaung tzu* includes diagrams for meditation postures named after animals, whose strengths come to those adopting the postures. The text also gives directions for imaging the body as if it were a crucible of the five elements perfectly balanced: fire, water, wood, metal and earth. The image appears once the initiate clears the mind to become "vacant" and so conscious of Tao, the way. *T'ai chi* or meditative dance follows the principles of *Chuang tzu*, based on a sacred sequence of what we call prayer.

Both Hindu and Buddhist devotees practice meditation chanting variants of the *Aum* mantram, all being invocations of the divine. Each mantram corresponds to a *chakra*, one of seven points of the body where particular functions reside, such as will or love. The *chakras* generate their own lights: blue for will (throat), green for love (heart), yellow for ego (solar plexus) and orange for health (abdomen). Usually seated in lotus position, those chanting imagine breathing in the light appropriate to the *chakra* being energized.

The vast diversity of prayers especially now in the East and among Christians and Jews could never be summarized adequately in the brief pages here, nor could every third world tradition—Muslim, the B'hai, or Sikh for example—be done justice in this context. Each religion however incorporates a variety of gestures: kneeling, standing, bowing, sitting, clapping, dancing; all signifying honor to God or a heavenly host. In spite of the secular character of this post-modern era, we still remain a praying people, for good reasons.

An Interview at the Upper Room Spiritual Center

In response to your many requests for information about the nature and work of Spiritual Centers, we visited a Center known for its vibrant community and energetic outreach: the Upper Room in Neptune, NJ. We talked there with Co-directors Rev. Jim O'Brien, Maureen Conroy, RSM, and Carol Conly, RSM.

If you are looking for a Spiritual Center in your area, a "Directory of Retreat and Ministry Centers in the U.S.A. and Canada" is available for $8 from Retreats International, Box 1067, Notre Dame, IN 46556.

FIP: Many of our readers have no Spiritual Center in their area and would like to know something about your work, especially about the renaissance of Spiritual Direction today and how you participate in the growing, worldwide interest in spirituality.

FR. J: There are five goals in our mission statement. We provide a place of prayer, meaning people come here for liturgies and days or weekends of prayer. We offer courses and workshops on prayer, biblical topics, and spirituality. We do Spiritual Direction and run a Training Program for Spiritual Directors, and we service 55 Charismatic prayer groups in the Diocese.

SR. M: This is our fifth year of training Spiritual Directors. So many people were asking us for Spiritual Direction that we couldn't meet the requests, and there was no one to refer them to. So we decided to create a training program. We worked out a three-year, part-time program, and admit candidates who have a solid educational background and have been in Spiritual Direction for a minimum of two years. We don't accept

Jim O'Brien has a Master's in Theology, a Certificate in Theological Studies from the Jesuit Institute for Spirituality and Worship at Berkeley, and a Certificate in Spiritual Direction from the Jesuit Center for Spiritual Growth in Wernersville, PA. Maureen Conroy has a Master's of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary, a Certificate in Spiritual Direction from Wernersville, and a Doctorate in Ministry from St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore. Carol Conly, former Co-director of the House of Prayer in Stillwater, NY, has a Certificate in Spiritual Direction from Albany, NY, and a Master's in Religious Education and Moral Theology.

anyone under 35 years of age, because it is crucial to have had life experience with pain, tragedy, and death in order to be present to that in others. The key to the program is supervision. It's like clinical training for pastors. Our students do supervised Spiritual Direction, write up verbatim reports of sessions, explore their own reactions.

FIP: There seems to be a fine line between counseling and Spiritual Direction. Would you clarify the difference for us?

FR. J: Counseling can be issue-oriented or problem-centered, as in marriage or career counseling, but Spiritual Direction focuses primarily on the relationship with God. So you don't necessarily have to have a problem. It's what's happening between you and God, your religious experience, that counts.

FIP: Yet you must encounter some of the same problems as counselors, like fear or depression or anger. Would you illustrate the difference between counseling and Spiritual Direction by telling us how you respond to these kinds of dynamics.

SR. C: I help people to surface their negative feelings, like anger, by inviting them to explore them with me during a session. We look for causes and try to gain understanding of the issues involved. I then encourage them to bring the feelings to God. I help them to notice how God responds to the anger or whatever we're dealing with. This frees them to be more open to God's acceptance.

FIP: So Spiritual Direction incorporates counseling and adds the religious dimension to it.

SR. M: Yes, and you can deal with any issue in the same way. You bring people to the place where they can put their issues before God. In counseling, it wouldn't be appropriate to do that.

FR. J: For example: A woman came who had been away from church for nine months. She felt tremendous anger towards the church and complained about it's being cold and hypocritical. Eventually it came out that a clergyman had been emotionally distant from her at the time of her daughter's death, and she just couldn't go back to church after that. So my role as Spiritual Director was to allow her to vent her anger, as she perceived it, at everybody: the priest, the church, and at God. Before long, she shifted from needing counseling to wanting to pray. At first she thought God was distant, then God was near, then God was embracing. Eventually she got to the point where she could easily express her anger at God to God, and was able to start building a real relationship with God. One day in our session, she yelled at God, "Where were you?"

The next week, an image came to her in prayer of Jesus as the broken one, the crucified one. She saw him weep over the death of her child, and that made her break down. She was moved to the insight that God is weak, vulnerable, tearful, and suffers with us. God became a loving, sensitive person who had wept with her in the hospital room when a priest seemed indifferent to her pain. Eventually, she was reconciled to the church, became active in a neighborhood parish, and is now a key person in lay ministry. That type of experience with God changes people's lives.

SR. C: So it's not leaving anger behind, or embracing the anger by yourself, but knowing that God is embracing you while you face the anger, that God is there with you at the deepest, darkest moment.

SR. M: It's not a movement away from anger, but with the anger to God. We have to feel all the pain and hurt to the fullest, or else it's going to come out in some other way or be repressed. An important dynamic in Spiritual Direction is to help people to be open to God's self-revelation, God's self-communication. Jim never said to his Directee, "God is weeping with you." She discovered that herself in her experience of prayer. Jim helped her to savor that. Spiritual Directors don't always say encouraging things like, "God is with you." The important thing is for

the person to experience it himself or herself. To see how present God always is.

FIP: How often do people come for Spiritual Direction, and how long do they usually continue it?

SR. M: Usually an hour once a month for weeks, months, years. I have had some people for 8 or 9 years.

FR. J: I just switched Spiritual Directors myself for the first time in 13 years, because mine moved away.

FIP: You must meet resistance and other blocks in the Spiritual Direction process. What are the most common obstacles and how do you overcome them?

SR. C: I use the old phrase, "the world and the flesh, and the devil," and give it a modern interpretation: negative emotions, consumerism, materialism, self-inflicted guilt, and the whole sense of being unloved, of not deserving God's love.

SR. M: We have been focusing in the last few years on prayer and discernment to get through the blocks. We go through an exploring process with the person and look for causes. We look at the closeness or the distance in their relationship to God and their feelings about that. We tend to use Ignatius of Loyola's approach, because it calls forth the total human being; it integrates feelings, images, thought so that one's humanness, one wholeness, develops.

FIP: How would you respond to Jung's charge that Ignatian Spirituality does not overcome ego-centeredness and doesn't develop the deep spiritual self?

FR. J: I don't know what his reason was for saying that. The first few weeks of the Ignatian experience, especially when God is drawing someone into conversion: if that doesn't break down the ego, I don't know what does.

SR. M: The experience of Ignatian desolation is like the shadow coming to the fore in Jungian analysis.

FIP: I would like to ask you, since you are so intimately involved in spiritual work, how you assess our era. Clearly we are witnessing a spiritual renaissance, an in-breaking of the Spirit. To what extent do you think it is like the spiritual renewals of the 12th and 16th centuries, and to what extent is something new happening, perhaps in response to 20th century scientism and materialism?

SR. M: I would say something new has opened up. It seems that the Spirit is touching the whole gamut of life, all human beings. During the 12th and 16th centuries, primarily people in monasteries could develop spiritual life. What is new today is the awareness that spirituality, spiritual development, is for everyone. This new consciousness is permeating all the churches and all of society.

FIP: There is a lot of confusion today about the meaning of a word you just used, "spirituality." Would you give us your definition?

FR. J: Spirituality, for me, relates to the way one organizes and understands one's unit of religious experiences. It's helpful to note that there is a variety of spiritualities. We could talk about Ignatian spirituality, Franciscan spirituality, Benedictine, Marian, Charismatic, and many others. Each emphasizes a particular approach, but it doesn't matter which you use. You discern what a person needs when you listen to him or her speak, you try to see how God is moving them. For example, is this person walking a dark path, carrying a cross? Is this person walking in the Light carrying a golden image? That's our starting point, to discern what's happening in the first place. Individuals then can be reached by a variety of spiritualities.

SR. M: I remember a priest who was deeply lonely, feeling alienated, isolated. One day he was doing a baptism and experienced a very special movement of the Spirit. It was as though he heard a voice saying, "You belong to me and you belong to the Kingdom." That gave him a very deep sense of belonging and of God's desire for him to feel he belonged to the Kingdom. It was a brief moment that created a deep change.

FIP: But a spiritual experience doesn't have to be something as dramatic as that, does it? In the healing movemet, of course, some people

have recovered their eyesight or their ability to walk, but for others, a spiritual experience has to do with a very simple event.

SR. C: Yes. I have a 65-year-old gentleman in Spiritual Direction. One day during prayer he felt a burning sensation in the area of his heart. He needed to identify that feeling as a religious experience, a burning for love of God.

FR. J: All of human experience is capable of being interpreted that way.

FIP: There is a trend today toward understanding spiritual development as simply human development seen from the religious perspective. To see spiritual growth as the growth toward wholeness of a person in relationship to God. It's a question of looking at spiritual development from the religious perspective, adding a dimension of meaning to the concepts developmental psychology uses.

SR. M: That's right, spirituality is a deep involvement in life, and with God. It's human involvement with God. The person who is growing deeply is the one growing spiritually.

SR. C: If a person is not developing holistically, I wonder if the person is developing. I'm very suspicious of religious "highs" and I call people who court "highs" daisy people: they are out of touch with what matters. Growing people are grounded. A woman came to me and said, "Sister Carol, teach me to pray." Buried deep under the rainbow and daisies were alcoholism, two children sexually abused by her husband, and an affair. Once she delved into herself and opened herself up to God's light, she started seeing that everything was being masked. It was very hard, but she stayed with it, and now the whole family is in counseling.

FR. J: You may notice, listening to the three of us, that we have a common language. When we talk about religious experiences, we talk about developing relationships with God. We don't talk about "the spiritual life." We talk about relationships, about prayer.

FIP: Have you witnessed radical changes occurring in people's lives as a result of Spiritual Direction? Have you seen an egotistical person become generous, a guilty person turn into a God-centered person, a fearful person become loving?

SR. M: I have seen miracles! People change from being self-centered, self-absorbed, to being happy and fun-filled, free, self-giving individuals. I have seen myself become able to face repressed areas and become free of them without a great deal of pain and struggle, because I faced them with God, in prayer.

FIP: Let's talk about your use of prayer in Spiritual Direction. I un-

Tom Dunham

derstand there is a movement today away from precise methods toward greater spontaneity in prayer.

FR. J: Yes. At the Upper Room, we've moved away from teaching methods of prayer and meditation. Probably our teaching reflects the Ignatian methodology more than others, but Spiritual Direction is individualized; we do what is appropriate for the individual. People are more oriented toward relationships in the last 4 or 5 years. "Teach me how to have a good marriage." "Teach me how to have a happy family." "How do I get along at work?" "What are the ten steps?" So we have oriented our teaching and preaching toward relationships, noticing where God is working in them, how to share feelings, how to communicate, rather than specific types of prayer.

SR. C: One of my basic stances when people ask me to teach them to pray is that prayer comes out of one's relationship with God. I pray for the faith and courage to face realities, and I ask the same for others. When we start to pray we face the reality that we have to change, because we're neither past nor future; we're becoming in the present. The hardest thing for us to do sometimes is to face the present reality and the demand it places on us to grow. Prayer makes that possible.

FR. J: My next course is entitled "Beginning to Pray." It's going to be a team-taught course: a mother of five children, a banker, myself. We're going to talk about various kinds of relationships, work involvement, how prayer can orient everything toward God. For example, I decide right now that I will pray, no matter that I'm sick; or the children have been screaming and I just spent all day running around the mall, picked up my husband from the train station, cooked dinner, and feel exhausted. That is not the right time for prayer. We emphasize appreciating one's body as the only place one can experience God. You can't experience God if you're tense and exhausted. So we teach people how to relax, to give themselves permission to go to sleep when they are tired, to recognize that prayer changes when one is sick, to set aside time for prayer when one feels fresh. We recommend that you do what works for you: five, twenty, thirty minutes a day, whatever you can, so your prayer time stays special and dynamic, fluid, rewarding.

SR. C: If we want a relationship to grow, we must spend time with the person. As individuals we differ greatly and relate in our own style. It's the same relating to God.

FIP: I am sorry that our time is up. Thank you.

Care

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN

What does it mean to care? Let me start by saying that the word care has become a very ambivalent word. When someone says: "I will take care of him!" it is more likely an announcement of an impending attack than of a tender compassion. And besides this ambivalence, the word care is most often used in a negative way. "Do you want coffee or tea?" "I don't care." "Do you want to stay home or go to the movie?" "I don't care." "Do you want to walk or go by car?" "I don't care." This expression of indifference toward choices in life has become commonplace. And often it seems that not to care has become more acceptable than to care, and a carefree life-style more attractive than a careful one.

Real care is not ambiguous. Real care excludes indifference and is the opposite of apathy. The word care finds its roots in the Gothic *Kara* which means lament. The basic meaning of care is: to grieve, to experience sorrow, to cry out with. I am very much struck by this background of the word care because we tend to look at caring as an attitude of the strong toward the weak, of the powerful toward the powerless, of the have's toward the have-not's. And, in fact, we feel quite uncomfortable with an invitation to enter into someone's pain before doing something about it.

Still, when we honestly ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean most to us, we often find that it is those, who, instead of giving much advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a gentle and tender hand.

You might remember moments in which you were called to be with a friend who had lost a wife or husband, child or parent. What can you say, do, or propose at such a moment? There is a strong inclination to say: "Don't cry; the one you love is in the hands of God." "Don't be sad because there are so many good things left worth living for." But are we ready to really experience our powerlessness in the face of death and say:

Excerpted with permission from Out of Solitude, *copyright 1974 by Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN.*

Paul M. Schrock

"I do not understand. I do not know what to do but I am here with you." Are we willing to not run away from the pain, to not get busy when there is nothing to do and instead stand rather in the face of death together with those who grieve?

The friend who cares makes it clear that whatever happens in the external world, being present to each other is what really matters. In fact, it matters more than pain, illness, or even death. It is remarkable how much consolation and hope we can receive from authors who, while offering no answers to life's questions, have the courage to articulate the situation of their lives in all honesty and directness. Kierkegaard, Sartre, Camus, Hammarskjold, and Merton—none of them—have ever offered solutions. Yet many of us who have read their works have found new strength to pursue our own search. Their courage to enter so deeply into human suffering and to become present to their own pain gave them the power to speak healing words.

Therefore, to care means first of all to be present to each other. From experience you know that those who care for you become present to you. When they listen, they listen to you. When they speak, you know they speak to you. And when they ask questions, you know it is for your sake and not for their own. Their presence is a healing presence because they accept you on your terms, and they encourage you to take your own life seriously and to trust your own vocation.

Our tendency is to run away from the painful realities or to try to change them as soon as possible. But cure without care makes us into rulers, controllers, manipulators, and prevents a real community from taking shape. Cure without care makes us preoccupied with quick changes, impatient and unwilling to share each other's burden. And so cure can often become offending instead of liberating. It is therefore not so strange that cure is not seldom refused by people in need. Not only have individuals refused help when they did not sense a real care, but also oppressed minorities have resisted support, and suffering nations have declined medicine and food when they realized that it was better to suffer than to lose self-respect by accepting a gift out of a non-caring hand.

Deep Prayer

SRI SWAMI SATCHIDANANDA

"In prayer you may use a lot of words," writes the author, "but that is not the real prayer. The real prayer comes after you finish speaking." His article communicates the confident strength and warmth that issue from the experience of deep prayer.

Prayers are powerful, good thoughts. A sincere prayer that comes from a faithful heart can perform miracles. Have that faith. Many, many things can happen by prayer. A great thinker once said: "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

God is really everywhere, not in a particular form, but as an omnipresent awareness or power. God is consciousness itself. By your concentrated sincere prayer, you are tuning your mental radio to receive that power. By tuning the radio, you are not creating music. It is already there; your tuning merely attracts the radio waves. When you tune your mind to the proper wavelength, you will receive God's grace and experience Cosmic Consciousness.

If your prayer is not answered, don't blame God for that. You may pray for ten years and get nothing, whereas somebody else might pray for one minute and get everything. This depends on the quality of your prayer, how honestly and sincerely you pray. The sincerity in seeking comes only when you know that you have a limited capacity. It's only when you say, "I can't do it anymore, please help me," that the help comes. You then link yourself with an unlimited capacity. Sometimes God acts like a hard-hearted person, waiting until you really give up and the last bit of your egoism is renounced.

If you want God to come in, make room. When you become aware of your smallness, it opens your mind. All of nature is ready to give to you. You need not go and praise the sun to get light. Just open the window

The Reverend Sri Swami Satchidananda is Founder/Director of the Integral Yoga Institutes and Satchidananda Ashrams, which serve as teaching and residential spiritual centers. Dedicated to the ecumenical movement, his motto is "Truth is One, paths are many." He travels widely, sharing his message with people through lectures, television, and interviews. His latest book is the Lotus Prayer Book, *Integral Yoga Publications.*

Tom Dunham

and the sunlight comes in. As long as you don't put up a barrier, you get light. In the same way, God is ready to help you. Don't allow your pride to get between you and God's help.

In prayer you may use a lot of words, but that is not the real prayer. The real prayer comes after you finish speaking. The words simply prepare your mind. You finish the prayer and you just become still. In deep prayer, you forget everything. You forget your body, mind, and personality. You lose yourself.

Deep prayer comes from the heart. It's not the head that prays, it's the heart. When you sing or pray to God from your heart, you don't have to worry if you hit the right note. God understands our innermost prayer. Many children communicate with their mothers in this way, by sounds no one else understands. Sometimes when the baby cries, only the mother understands, because theirs is a special language.

A true devotee is the one who has complete faith in God. He trusts in God as a baby trusts in the mother. He accepts everything in life as God's will. She never questions God. And in prayer she just expresses trust and faith. She doesn't even ask anything from God. She knows that God will give everything needed even without asking, and will not give anything that is not good even if asked.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* four kinds of devotees are mentioned. The first asks God to remove his suffering. The second requests material things. The third prays for liberation. But the fourth does not ask for anything. She just enjoys praying and praising God. This is the highest form of prayer.

The great South Indian saint Ramalingam prayed to the Lord: "You are feeding me; I am fed. You are making me sleep; I am sleeping. You are showing me; I am seeing. You are making me happy; I am happy. And not only me—the entire universe is like that. You are the One behind every movement, every experience." If you want to have a prayer, pray to God to help you to always remember this Truth: that you are God's child and God is taking care of you every minute.

Abraham Lincoln and Prayer

DAN BASSUK

Abraham Lincoln and two Quaker women, December, 1862 or January, 1863.

In Council with Edwin Stanton who was the Secretary of War, Lincoln said, "Burnside must be removed, but I cannot find a man to take his place. He is doing no good. It seems like everything is against us. I do not know what to do, and cannot see one ray of hope." Stanton could offer no relief, and he left the council room.

Lincoln walked with him to the door, and observing two women sitting in the waiting room, asked who they were. "They are two Quaker ladies who want to see you," was the reply. "Let them come next," Lincoln said, although there were others who had arrived earlier, officials on important business.

Rachel Grellet and Elizabeth L. Comstock were ushered into his presence. He received them kindly and sat down between them. He had met them before: indeed had given them letters to all army officers, directing that they be allowed to go wherever they should elect under protection of the army. They had visited various camps and hospitals where, as angels of mercy, they had cheered many a soldier boy in distress, as two saintly mothers ministering to their physical and spiritual needs.

George Hartly relates the story of this visit, as told to him personally by Elizabeth Comstock, giving it in her own words as nearly as he could remember (and with his capitalization).

> We were seated in the council room with Lincoln alone. We told him that we had been IMPRESSED that we ought to come to him with a message of love and cheer and encouragement. In appearance he was downcast, and looked as if ready to give up. He said, 'Well, if you have any encouragement for me please give it. I need it. Be free to say whatever is on your mind to say.' I said, 'Abram, we believe we have a message for the Lord for thee. He has laid a great burden upon thee and thou canst not bear it alone. It is too much for thee. He says, be of good courage and I will be

Dan Bassuk is a regular contributor to "F.I.P." This selection is from his new pamphlet, "Abraham Lincoln and the Quakers," Pendle Hill Publications, Wallingford, PA.

Paul M. Schrock

with thee. I will not leave thee nor forsake thee. Thou shalt prevail, only be of good courage. Cast all thy burdens upon HIM. The destiny of this great nation is upon HIM. Do not try to carry it thyself. Look to HIM. He will guide thee. HE will give thee wisdom and thou shalt prevail. May it not be that GOD has raised thee up, like Moses, to be the great emancipator of His people? To establish the nation united and free? As HE said to Joshua, only be strong and of good courage.'

When we had finished our message, as we believe the LORD had given it to us, we arose to go, and said, 'We had better not take any more of thy

precious time.' He said, 'Aren't you going to pray with me?' With one voice we said, 'We hoped thee would ask for that.' We both knelt and he knelt between us. We clasped our hands each in front. He reached his broad hand and clasped mine in his right and that of Rachel in his left, and his hands trembled like a leaf in a breeze. It was a very solemn occasion, and we felt as if we were helping him to roll the burden off his shoulders. When we had ceased speaking he said, "Amen," good and strong.

When we arose his countenance was so changed he looked as though he had the victory.

* * * * *

In the winter of 1864 a number of the officers of the Sanitary Commission (hospital) were presented to President Lincoln, and each shook hands with him. When it came the turn of a tiny Quaker lady from Philadelphia, she said:

Yes, Friend Abraham, thee needs not think thee stands alone. We all are praying for thee. All our hearts, the hearts of all people, are behind thee, and thee cannot fail! The Lord has appointed thee, the Lord will sustain thee, and the people love thee. Take comfort, friend Abraham, God is with thee!

Lincoln responded:

I know it. If I did not have the knowledge—it is not hope—it is knowledge—the knowledge that God is sustaining and will sustain me until my appointed work is done, I could not live. If I did not believe that the hearts of all loyal people were with me, I could not endure it. My heart would have broken long ago. It is that blessed knowledge and that blessed belief that holds me to my work. This has been a bad day, and I was almost overwhelmed when you ladies came in. You have given a cup of water to a very thirsty and grateful man. Ladies, you have done me a great kindness today. I knew it before. I knew that good men and good women were praying for me, but I was so tired, I had almost forgotten. God bless you all.

Mirabai: Hindu Princess, Beggar and Saint

WILLIAM M. STEPHENS

Here is an inspiring story about a saint revered in the East, little known in the West. Rejecting the role society imposed on her, Mirabai was criticised and persecuted by envious enemies, but she found the courage to remain unwavering in both her fervent devotion to Krishna and selfless service to the poor.

In the barren hills and ancient villages of Rajasthan, in northwest India, time has little meaning. Life goes on today in much the same manner as it did five centuries ago when the saint Mirabai was born. The bullock carts still creak along the dusty roads; the farmers still work their fields with wooden plows pulled by water buffaloes; the women, dark-eyed and graceful, still draw water from the same stone-rimmed wells and balance the pots on their heads as they swing along the paths between fields of millet. And in the Mira Mandir, a Krishna temple at Chitor built by Rajah Bhaj for the use of his lovely *rani*, Mirabai, people still bow to the Lord Krishna and sing *bhajans* written by Mirabai for her Divine Beloved.

Few Westerners have heard of Mirabai. In India she is revered for her beautiful songs, her devotion to God, and her life of selfless service. She was a queen who gave up wealth and position to worship God as she pleased—to wander, destitute, radiant in her rags. She was a lover of God whose faith was so great that a draught of poison given her by her enemies turned to nectar on her lips. Her fame spread so widely during her lifetime that the Emperor Akbar, Moghul ruler of India, is said to have come in disguise to bow at Mirabai's feet. For a Moslem leader to bow to a Hindu was heresy if not treason. And a female Hindu . . . !

Mira was born in 1498, the only daughter of a Rajput prince killed soon thereafter in battle against the Moghul invaders. Mira grew up in the palace of her uncle, who ruled the kingdom of Mewar.

One day the child saw a wedding procession. Her mother pointed out the bride in her gold-brocaded sari and the resplendent bridegroom. Mira was enchanted. "Where is *my* bridegroom, Mother?" she asked.

Bill Stephens is an attorney and author who writes a syndicated newspaper column on older peoples' problems. An upcoming book is entitled The Path Through the Heart.

Her mother smiled tenderly. "The Lord Krishna is your bridegroom, dear."

From that day on, Mira considered herself to be the bride of Sri Krishna, the Avatar or God-man. According to Vedantic lore, the Avatar takes human form in every age for the benefit of mankind. Although Krishna the man lived thousands of years before Mira, she accepted him as her own personal Beloved. Soon after that, a wandering *sadhu* came to the palace and gave Mira a statuette of Krishna. The child embraced the object and often danced and sang and prayed before the image.

Mira grew to be a beautiful young woman. At sixteen she was betrothed to Bhaj Raj, the crown prince of Chitor. Before their wedding, Mira told him: "I will be a loving and faithful wife to you. But you must understand that Sri Krishna is my life and my eternal Beloved."

Bhaj approved of Mira's devotion. "If I must share your love," he said, "let me share it with the Highest of the High. I could not share you with any mortal man."

Soon after they were married, Bhaj's father died. Bhaj became the *rajah* and Mira the *rani*. The change in station had no effect on Mira's religious zeal. She continued to perform the ceremonies of *arti* and *kirtan* before the image of Krishna and to dance ecstatically for the pleasure of her Divine Beloved.

Every day Mira visited the poor villagers of the district, giving them food and comfort and teaching them love songs to Krishna. She prayed with the wandering *sadhus*, dervishes, and beggars, and chanted Krishna's name wherever she went.

Although Bhaj remained tolerant of his wife's spiritual fervor, his relatives were offended by her behavior and they tried to poison the king's mind against her. Even the palace staff gossiped about the unconventional *rani*. In an attempt to squelch the gossip, Bhaj built a special temple for Mira's use. She accepted it lovingly and invited all the beggars and *sadhus* to worship there with her, to the mortification of her in-laws.

As time went on, songs and stories of Mira's beauty and saintliness were spread far and wide by wandering ascetics and *bhaktas*. Spiritual seekers came in droves to receive Mirabai's *darshan* (the blessing of her presence) and to hear her sing her inspiring *bhajans*.

Then tragedy struck. King Bhaj, while leading his troops against a Moslem army, was killed. Mirabai, at the age of twenty-three, became the queen dowager. Her brother-in-law, Ratan Singh, was crowned king of Chitor.

Tom Dunham

Ratan Singh and his wife had always been extremely critical of Mira. They felt that her public display of religiosity was unseemly for a member of the royal household. The most shocking thing was that she had refused to perform the ancient rite of *suttee*—throwing herself on her husband's funeral pyre. ("When the Divine Beloved wants me," she said, "he can take me.") To add insult to injury, she spent her bereavement not in

seclusion but in the company of her beggar friends, dancing and singing love songs.

In one of her song-poems, Mirabai wrote:

I took to keeping hermits' company, lost conventional modesty.
My sisters-in-law complained I scandalized the family name.
But I no longer care for their opinions.
My Beloved is not displeased with me.

Unable to curb Mira's disgraceful behavior by official means, the king and queen plotted to kill her. They sent to her a basket containing a deadly cobra. The servant who delivered the gift told Mira it was a *shaligram* (religious symbol). Mira accepted the gift graciously, and when she raised the lid of the basket there was indeed a *shaligram* inside. Later she wrote:

After Mira sang ecstatically of her Beloved's virtues,
The king sent her a serpent-basket.
Bathed and washed, she took a look
And found an image of God.

Other attempts to kill Mira were also described by her in poems:

O King, I know you gave me poison,
But I emerged safe.
Just as gold burned in fire
Comes out bright as a dozen suns. . . .

. . . A bed of spikes by the king was sent.
He ordered Mira to sleep on it.
When evening came and Mira went to sleep,
She lay as if on flowers.

One story relates that Mirabai was ordered by the king to drown herself. She attempted dutifully to follow his instructions, but the river would not receive her. The waves rose and threw her back onto the bank.

Finally, in distress over the unhappiness caused at the palace by her manner of worshipping God, Mirabai left Chitor and became a wanderer, singing of her love for God wherever she went and attracting many devotees. Upon reaching the holy city of Brindaban (where Krishna spent his childhood and where a thousand temples dedicated to Krishna line the Jumna River), she took the *darshan* of the saint Rama-

nanda, the guru of the poet-mystic Kabir. Some Indian scholars believe that Mirabai became a disciple of Ramananda. Others say that her guru was Tulsi Das, a well-known *bhakta* of northern India. Still others say that Raidas, a disciple of Ramananda, was Mirabai's guru, and that Raidas was the wandering *sadhu* who gave the statuette to the child Mira.

After Mirabai's departure from Chitor, calamities befell the kingdom. The poor people, who loved Mira dearly, were almost in revolt against the king for his treatment of her. Even nature seemed to disapprove of the Chitor *rajah*, for serious illnesses struck his household and the monsoon failed, causing crop failures. In desperation, the king repented for his persecution of Mira. Incognito, he made a pilgrimage to Mewar, where Mirabai had settled in her uncle's kingdom.

When the king and a group of accompanying Brahmins came into Mirabai's presence, they fell at her feet and begged her forgiveness, which she readily granted. But when they entreated her to return to Chitor, she told them she would ask Krishna for his counsel in the matter. Retiring to the temple for guidance, she prayed before a statue of Krishna. According to legend, the statue came alive and opened his arms to receive his loving bride, and the soul of Mirabai merged with her Divine Beloved.

Paul M. Schrock

To Share

O God,
guide me,
protect me,
make of me a shining lamp
and a brilliant star.
Thou are the Mighty and the
Powerful.
by: Abdu'l-Baha'

Sent to us by Jay Bender of Radford, VA.

O God! Refresh and gladden my spirit,
Purify my heart, illumine my powers,
I lay all my affairs in thy hand.

Thou art my guide and my Refuge.
I will no longer be sorrowful and grieve;
I will be a happy and joyful being.

O God! I will no longer be full of anxiety,
nor will I let trouble harass me.
I will not dwell on the unpleasant things of life.

O God! Thou art more friend to me than I am to myself. I dedicate
myself to thee, O Lord.

Sent to us by Patricia Hurd of Marblehead, MA.

Please send your favorite prayer or one you have written to The Editor, F.I.P., 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

Learning to Walk in Faith

JEANETTE MARTINO LAND

A "F.I.P." reader from Florida describes her long ordeal with a painful, incurable illness suddenly healed by the power of prayer.

We welcome your account of your own "Transforming Experience" (an experience related to prayer or meditation that had an outcome for the good of an individual, group, or institution). You need not be a professional writer; we are interested in your story, *not your* style. *Please send it (typed and double spaced) to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ, 08542, and include a brief biography.*

Pain stabbed me like a lightning bolt, jolting my memory in its intensity. The thought, "It's over, I'm OK!" filtered through the clouds in my head.

But there was something wrong. My left leg was numb. Dead! A useless lever. Before I could fully comprehend this, foreboding clouds closed in and swallowed me in darkness.

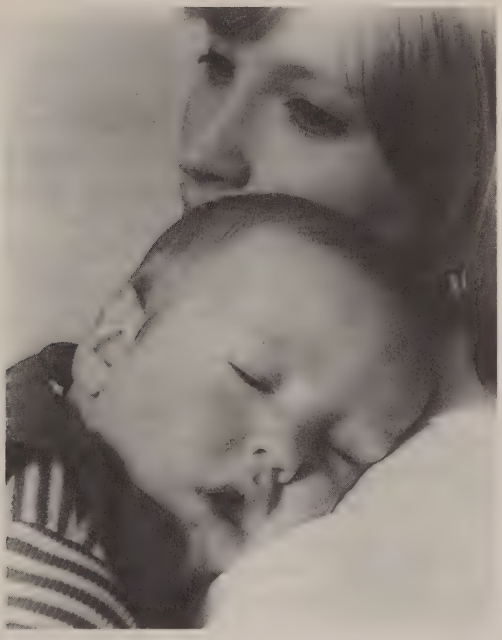
The date was April 18, 1977. The day before, I had entered the hospital for a "routine" hysterectomy. I recuperated nicely from the surgery, but my leg continued to be numb, from behind my knee to the tips of my toes. Insidiously, the numbness turned to excruciating pain.

As Mother's Day approached, I returned to the gynecologist. He ordered blood tests. Nothing. The invisible fires of hell continued to consume me while I begged an unanswering God for mercy. "What am I being punished for?" "Why me?" "Haven't I suffered enough?" "WHERE ARE YOU, GOD?"

Why did God have the audacity to abandon me? As I wallowed in self-pity, it did not occur to me that I might be abandoning God.

Walking was difficult at best; sleep was impossible. By this time, I could almost see the smoke swirling around my smoldering foot. The gynecologist, helpless and perplexed, referred me to a neurologist.

As the neurologist poked, prodded, and swore softly under his breath, I grew uneasy. He said, "There is no reflex action in your left leg, from behind the knee down to the toes." On June 7, I entered the hospital again.



Sitting on the edge of my bed, the neurologist took my hand. He hesitated, then spoke, kindly, yet firmly:

"DIAGNOSIS: Causalgia—burning pain resulting from an injury to a peripheral nerve.

CAUSE: Unknown.

PROGNOSIS: No known cure."

The words stung, as if he had just pronounced my death sentence.

Lying in my hospital bed, my future appeared as bleak as the walls around me. My prayers intensified. I begged, I pleaded; others interceded for an end to this suffering. But pain continued to be a constant companion.

When I hobbled from the hospital ten days later, I resembled the "Bionic Woman." Hooked to my waistband was a transistor radio-like box. Connected to it were 4 wires that ended in 4 electrodes, 2 "pasted" near each ankle.

The purpose of this device, known as a Transcutaneous Nerve Stimu-

lator (TNS) was to block the message of pain to my brain. But it did not block the depression that began to sneak into the recesses of my mind, a shadowy figure stalking its prey.

With my doctor's permission, and that of the airline (the pilot had to be alerted of my TNS because it was battery-operated), I flew home in July, a "surprise package" wrapped in a wheelchair for my daddy's 80th birthday.

Not long into the flight, the stewardess asked me to turn off my TNS because of an impending electrical storm. So easy to flick the "off" switch on the black box. The gathering storm clouds in my head were another matter; they could not be turned off as easily.

My prayers remained unanswered. Summer dragged its feet into fall.

Then my mental attitude improved almost dramatically. My prayers began to change. Yet in spite of my more positive thinking, I was still stuck in the "I want what I want" stage. I was unwilling to trust God TOTALLY. MY WILL, and what I thought were my needs, prevailed.

Learning to walk again for the third time was as slow as my walk in faith: literally one foot before the other, one painful step at a time. But I persevered—with positive thinking, prayer, and spiritual reading. I kept telling myself that I could still function, I could still get around. It was painful, yes, but I could manage. And my brain was still functioning, for better or worse!

> "Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28, GNB)

As I read and re-read this verse, the fire in my foot began to be replaced by a Holy Fire within. The deep sense that GOD IS and that GOD CARES began to fall on once-more fertile soil.

Inch by inch, like letting out the string so a kite could fly, I let go of my rebellion, of the blaming, the anger. I was becoming free, free to let God's Will be manifested in me. The day I ACCEPTED the fact that I might indeed have to live with that pain the rest of my life was the day I began my walk on the road to recovery.

Thanksgiving was approaching when I visited the neurologist again. As he somberly examined me, his face grew puzzled. "You know, I really hated to have to see you today," he confessed. "I decided that we'd have to discuss amputation if there was no improvement." He paused, then continued, "I can't explain it—your reflex has returned, yet there is NO KNOWN CURE!"

Jubilantly, I left the doctor's office! The clouds in my head were as nonexistent as those in the heavenly blue sky today. For, as those wonderful words turned over in my mind, the bright sun was but a candle compared to the Light at the end of my tunnel. I had believed that God *would* meet *my needs*, WHATEVER THEY WERE, and God had met my needs for a full recovery.

An Advent Meditation

POLLY RICHARDSON

John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord." Matthew 3:2-3 (RSV)

These words of John the Baptist announce the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. Though Jesus was a grown man at the time, a parallel is often drawn between the Judeans awaiting Christ's arrival in Galilee and Advent, and our annual awaiting of the celebration of his birth. John preached in the Judean desert, urging people of all backgrounds to repent and change. Many people did flock to him, believed his word, and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, publicly confessing their wrongs.

This passage reminds us that our God is a forgiving one, constantly willing to excuse our wrongdoings. God knows that our vows to better ourselves will be broken; that time and again we will fall and need pardon. God never asks that we be perfect; God never expects us to be perfect. God trusts us to make our own decisions and is there for us if we go astray.

Some people ask God's forgiveness through private prayer, others while worshipping within a community. But no matter how we choose to be reconciled to the Lord, let us hope that with the beginning of this Advent season we can start anew, like the followers of John the Baptist.

Polly Richardson, a senior at Stuart Country Day School, delivered this meditation at an Upper School Advent Service in 1986.

THE COMPANY OF STRANGERS
by Parker J. Palmer, 1983, Crossroad Publishing Company, New York, New York, paperback, $7.95.

The author of *The Promise of Paradox* has written a cogent account of Christian praxis—the renewal of America's public life through our conscious participation. Palmer asserts that "without public experience we cannot experience the fullness of God's word. We need the strangers, the others. Our personal life hinges on a spirituality of public life where deep commitment to God is enhanced by public participation. People with differing interests become related through the public sphere—watching a street performer, sitting on a school board, exchanging thoughts with a taxi driver. This book is satisfying intellectually, compelling spiritually, and provides a concrete examination of what we can do to renew our communities. *KLH*

THE GRACIOUS MYSTERY: FINDING GOD IN ORDINARY EXPERIENCE
James J. Bacik, 1987, St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, Ohio, paper, $5.95.

The author focuses upon the growing number of individuals involved in what he terms "a religious or spiritual search": "the quest for meaning in the midst of absurdity, for commitment in the face of multiple options, for a deeper life amidst the temptation to superficiality." He calls for a commitment to a spirituality that is "contemporary," "dialectical," and "American" in the hope that people will find the Spirit at work in everyday experience and will cultivate a deeper awareness of self and of God. This book is excellent for self-improvement group discussions. *BFL*

JOURNEY TOWARDS HOLINESS: A WAY OF LIVING FOR GOD'S NATION
by Alan Kreider, 1987, Herald Press, Scottdale, PA, paper, $9.95.

What is holiness? How can human communities become part of God's "holy nation?" Since he first became conscious of his own experience of the Holy in prayer groups, the author has been concerned with the

growth of "social holiness" in families, cities, churches, and the world. He calls for personal and communal transformation with an eye to the future and belief that "God is not finished with the world." This dynamic work gives the reader a sense of the "Inexpressible One." Biblical Passages come alive as Kreider takes a fresh look into the Scriptures and sees their practical application to every area of life. I recommend the book for its deep insight and power for living.

BEHOLD THE BEAUTY OF THE LORD: PRAYING WITH ICONS
by Henri J. M. Nouwen, 1987, Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame, IN, paper, $7.95.

This is a beautiful book. The author of *Out of Solitude*, *The Wounded Healer*, and over twenty other books on the spiritual life presents his meditations on four Russian icons (reproduced in full color). He has found himself turning to these images for spiritual nourishment when feeling drained or depressed, and believes that everyone who gazes attentively at the icons will gain a "glimpse of heaven." Let the icons "become yours," Nouwen writes, let them "guide you by day and by night, in good times and in bad, when you feel sad and when you feel joyful," and you will come to understand "the unique way in which God has chosen to love you." *MFG*

AWAKENED FROM WITHIN: MEDITATIONS ON THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
by Brother Roger of Taizé, 1987, Doubleday and Co., Garden City, NY, hardback, $12.95.

Walking into the "church" at Taizé France, one is instantly overcome by a holy atmosphere. Monks lie prostrate in prayer. Others sit in absolute stillness. Others stand quietly in the flickering candlelight. This book recaptures the feel of Taizé by gathering selections from the writings of Prior Roger, the inspired founder of history's first Protestant monastery, now 40 years in existence. The "Rule of Taizé" is followed by topics like "The Silence of Contemplation" and "Where Can We Draw the Courage?" Brother Roger calls his readers to perpetual prayer, defined as "descending into the depths of God" and "inner silence at all times." *MFG*

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, INC.

291 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, New Jersey 08542

(609) 896-3636

Carl Allison Evans (1880-1956)
Founder
Paul Griffith (1921-1983)
Editor

TRUSTEES

Kathryn G. Brown
President Emeritus, Co-founder
Paul Walsh
President
Reuben L. Musey
First Vice-President
Samuel M. Silver
Vice-President
Howard Ende
Treasurer
Emily Sargent Councilman
Nirbha Joseph M. Britton
James T. C. Liu
Edwiene Schmitt

Mary FordGrabowsky
Editor
Kimberley Hollingsworth
Executive Secretary

Since 1949 the purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

© Copyright 1987 by Fellowship in Prayer

This bimonthly publication is endowed by the Ruth Allison Lilly Fund

Material in this publication is copyrighted and may not be reproduced by photocopy of any other means without written permission.

We welcome articles on prayer, meditation, spiritual experience, religious faith or practices, and similar topics. Manuscripts should not exceed 1200 words, should be typed, double spaced, and sent to The Editor, Fellowship In Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542. Please include a biography of no more than five lines.

"For a World United in Prayer"

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

291 Witherspoon Street
Princeton, New Jersey 08542

Non-Profit Org.
U.S.Postage Paid
Princeton, NJ
Permit No. 415

Address Correction Requested